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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002552

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: ROYG UPDATE ON DISRUPTION OF AL-QAIDA CELL

REF: A. SANAA 2434

[B](#). SANAA 2410

[C](#). SANAA 2440

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull for Reasons 1.5 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On 10/22 Foreign Minister Qirbi convened a joint meeting with Interior Minister Alimi with key Western Embassies to provide an update on the September disruption of an al-Qaida cell (refs). Alimi provided further information on ROYG's investigation into the cell's activities and members, particularly information on several recent arrests in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, including specific names. He asserted that the "danger was over" for Western targets in Yemen because MOI believed that all cell members inside Yemen had been captured. Close cooperation between Yemen and Saudi Arabia appears to have broken this particular cell. Attendees at the briefing included Pol/Econ Chief and Deputy (Ambassador was on in-country travel, DCM was out of country), the ambassadors of France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands and the UK deputy head of mission. Despite the success of this investigation, Post's security practices will remain tight. End Summary.

ROYG Message: "All the Members" Inside Yemen Arrested;
"Danger is Over"

[1](#)2. (C) Interior Minister Alimi said it was "very important" to provide an update after the last meeting on 9/28 (ref c). He noted the 9/28 meeting was held to provide the Embassies a warning because of ROYG concern that, despite the capture of the main leader of the al-Qaida cell, they had not reached all members of the terror cell. Alimi said he wanted to provide a "clear picture" of ROYG actions to date, the results of the Yemen-Saudi investigation and assurances of increased safety to all Embassies that were targets. He noted the MOI was able to arrest "all the members" of the cell inside Yemen.

[1](#)3. (C) After the French Ambassador asked for clarification on the ROYG's message, Alimi said the official message was that Yemen is "safer now" and that the "danger is over." In response to further questioning by the Dutch Ambassador on previous comments by the ROYG that the arrests could be the "tip of the iceberg," Alimi said that he judges things according to reality and what he can see, but admitted that he cannot really know about things he has not yet seen. He invited the French Ambassador to re-open the French Cultural Institute, which was closed recently because of security concerns, and urged all attendees to send the message back to their governments that Yemen was safe.

Cell Information: New Names, Basoura Captured,
Financier Still At-Large in Saudi Arabia

[1](#)4. (C) Dr. Alimi described the cell as having three groups. The first was headed by the main leader, 'Amr Abdul Rahman al-Sharif, who remains in custody. The second was led by a financial coordinator named Abdul Rahman Basoura (ref c), who went to Saudi Arabia to collect funds to carry out the planned attacks. The Saudis recently handed Basoura over to the ROYG authorities after they arrested him as part of a joint investigation. He is currently in "security" (note: presumably the Political Security Organization (PSO). End Note) custody. The third group that advised on religious matters was led by a Syrian named Amr Majid al-Abiyad. Alimi said the KSA told the ROYG that they have arrested him and that he "admitted to transferring money to the cell to conduct terrorist acts."

[1](#)5. (C) Dr. Alimi said that MOI believes it has been able to arrest all members of the cell present in Yemen in cooperation with Saudi Arabia, although he remains worried about the "re-birth of other cells." He also mentioned that the last five members of the cell arrested in Yemen are still under investigation. This last group was arrested with documents proving that money had been transferred from Saudi Arabia. The name found on the official money transfer documents (Ahmed Saad al-Ghamdi) was provided to KSA authorities for follow-up, and Alimi noted that unless

al-Ghamdi used false identification, he was confident the name was correct and accurate.

16. (C) When asked about the total number arrested in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Alimi said that 17 persons were arrested in Yemen. In Saudi Arabia, he mentioned Basoura and al-Abiyad by name and said that the ROYG had provided "code names" to the Saudi authorities and had been informed that the Saudis had made the arrests. Dr. Alimi again characterized the Yemen-Saudi cooperation as "excellent."

FM Qirbi -- MOI Successful,
More Assistance Requested, and Media Leaks Damaging

17. (C) Foreign Minister Qirbi noted the Ministry of Interior has done a "very good job" in the last year and requested increased support so MOI "could do even better." He also cautioned about leaks to the media, saying that they have created a lot of anxiety that damaged the ROYG's move towards a more normal security situation. He specifically mentioned travel advisories and their negative impact on tourism, and said he did not want the price of transparency to be inflated security concerns that continue to damage Yemen's economy.

Comment

18. (S/NF) Begin Comment: The briefing was clearly aimed to provide assurances of safety. While the success of the continued investigation is impressive, Post will maintain its current vigilant security practices. Post does not deem that the new information requires a warden message. The evidence of a productive and cooperative Yemen-Saudi investigation is good news for regional security and efforts in other counter-terrorism areas such as combatting weapons smuggling. While the MOI repeated that they had "no objection" to sharing documents and evidence through "coordinating agencies" (Note: presumably the ORCA and PSO) and offered to inform "security" to share information, ORCA reports that they have only received a brief PSO investigative report and no access to any raw evidence. There is an apparent disconnect between the MOI and PSO on willingness to share information. End Comment.
HULL